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WHAT SERBIA WANTS

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We fear the Americans do not yet understand the life-and-death character of the struggle waged by a self-reliant and energetic people, who are coming forward at this great moment in history, convinced of the justice and integrity of their cause. Ordinarily a politician or a journalist will say that the Serbians are in general battling for the realization of their national ambition and for the readjustment of the "Balkan equilibrium." But these hackneyed phrases do not convey any well defined idea to an average American citizen. He does not quite understand why hundreds of thousands of precious lives and millions of dollars should be expended for the assertion of abstract principles.

It is desirable therefore to explain why the balance of political forces in the Balkans must be maintained even at the detriment of Serbia or her great Allies, the Entente powers, and to expose also what the Serbians want in regard to recognition of their national state. It is indispensable to explain the questions which follow, and formally to develop the trend of ideas which deeply affect the restoration of a tortured state. The first act consists in the raising up of Serbia out of the ruins, moral and material, under which she now lies, gasping and starving. But the repatriation of her exiles, and the resuscitation of her villages and towns, is not the only task incumbent upon this victimized nation. In the future she will also have to reconstruct of her own strength her political and educational tools, in order to prepare herself for the high cultural mission which will be thrust upon her as a member in the renewed Balkan or Yugoslav confederation. From her extreme suffering will come supreme wisdom, provided she knows how to avail herself of the promises made by the

Allied powers to sanction the creation of a new Adriatic state, namely Yugoslavia of which so much is written and discussed in recent times.

I

In 1914 at the outbreak of European War the population of Serbia together with Montenegro might have been estimated at 5,500,000 souls. The army comprised rather more than 350,000 men, including all three "bans" and the volunteers. Two million persons left the country at the time of the Austro-German and Bulgarian invasion of 1915. But there can be today hardly more than half a million refugees beyond the frontiers in Italy, Russia, Greece, France, England, Switzerland and America. The population now in Serbia must amount, therefore, to rather less than 3,000,000, of whom 1,500,000 have already become the charges of public or private philanthropy.

Almost all of the inhabitants of Serbia and Montenegro speak Serbian, and in vast majority belong to the Greek-Orthodox Church. There were in Serbia prior to the war 1450 churches and 90 monasteries. The property of the churches was valued at 50,700,000 dinars (\$10,000,000) and the monasteries 30,000,000 dinars. In addition to this there were 2600 elementary schools, 75 secondary schools, 2 theological seminaries, 2 military academies, 5 normal schools, 20 colleges, 1 university (at Belgrade), and 1 academy of science and art.

By her geographical situation Serbia is an agricultural country, where almost every peasant cultivates his own freehold. The holdings vary in size from 30 to 500 acres. The country produces wheat, barley, oats, maize, rye and beetroots. In the beginning of the war there were 252,000 horses, 1,645,000 head of cattle, 6408 sheep, 2,340,000 swine, and 1,790,000 goats. The forests have an area of 3,650,000 acres. The mineral resources are considerable, including coal, gold, copper, cement, silver and lead. The output of the mines was valued at 65,810,000 dinars. Flour milling is one of the most important of Serbian in-

dustries. In 1914 there were 32 large flour mills in the country. Brewing and distilling are extensively carried on. Other industries worth mentioning are carpet weaving, meat packing, sugar refining, and the preparation of wines.

When the invaders succeeded in occupying Serbia, they devastated or pillaged all mines, churches and monasteries. They burned houses and destroyed villages. It is difficult to calculate the number of dwellings reduced to ashes and ruins. According to information received from the districts of Kraina and Timok, and adding to that the reports obtained from the cities: Belgrade, Nish, Kragujevac, Skoplje, Prizren and Cetinje, we reckon more than 15,000 houses destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. No precise information prevails as to the number of churches demolished or damaged, or as to the workshops, factories, schools and farms which have been pilfered. The pillaging of the monasteries and the carrying off of the gold ornaments, vessels, books, old manuscripts, and archives, have especially caught the attention of the public, but it ought also be realized that numbers of buildings valuable to the state have likewise been subjected to terrible outrages. All libraries and precious documents have been removed and sent to Austria and Bulgaria. Domestic animals: cattle, pigs, sheep, horses and goats, as well as the reserves of crops have been requisitioned by the invaders, or consumed by the famished population. A large portion of the railroad lines was also destroyed, and nearly all the vehicles, carriages, carts and motor cars have disappeared from the country.

Estimates made as to the losses suffered by Serbia amount to about \$1,000,000,000. Who is going to pay this immense sum after the war? Austria, Bulgaria, or Turkey? There is no doubt that the war expenditure and refunding of the requisitions will be laid upon the conquered enemy after the conclusion of peace. But it is certain that so large an indemnity will not be paid off in a few weeks or months, although Serbia will be in immediate need of considerable resources. One must remember that she will not be alone in claiming compensation, and that

the devastation made in Italy, Bohemia, and Poland, has also reached enormous proportions.

II

Certain statesmen and politicians have suggested that an increase of territory at the expense of Bulgaria might to some extent compensate the losses sustained and add something to the prestige of Serbia. No one in Serbia takes this proposition seriously. It would be a betrayal of Serbia's past if she could dream of accepting such an offer. Europe has toward her a higher obligation than this. For centuries she has sacrificed herself to divert the invasion of Turkish hordes from Western Europe. The Entente Allies, now fighting for the same principle against unscrupulous military autocracies, will understand the Serbian national claims and will go so far as to admit them. For the last one hundred years Serbia has shown her vitality, her energy for work, her economic and her moral value. She has lived her life worthily. She would never for her own profit exact a right of conquest over Bulgaria. The calculations of benevolent friends who have thought to confer on Serbia the perilous mission of assimilating hostile populations in western Bulgaria are fallacious. Such annexed districts would probably be in a state of permanent revolt and intrigue, and they would have to be kept under the yoke at the cost of a burdensome military occupation. These provinces would augment the resources of the national budget, but they would impose an expenditure which would be as great as the receipts coming from them. Serbia does not want that. She believes that in Bulgaria there is still a sane and honest element opposing the imperialist motives of "Tsar" Ferdinand. With these democratic elements and real leaders of the Bulgarian people, the Serbians may be able to come to an understanding. But first of all it is essential that the Bulgarians must restore the Serbian territory they have seized. Furthermore, they must dissociate themselves from their Ferdinands and their jingo-imperialists, who inspire and gal-

vanize with Austrian ducats the policy of treachery and greed. They should turn from the imperialistic dreams of Tsar Simeon and Tsar Samuel to the democratic tradition of 1876. If they do not yield to this policy they will after all bow to a *force majeure*, and reënter a new quadruple Balkan confederation founded on the very principles of the Balkan League of 1912. The possible quadruple alliance of four Balkan states, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Bulgaria is not a mirage. This idea was many times advocated by both foreign and Balkan politicians. In the second half of the nineteenth century its ardent sponsors in Serbia were Jovan Ristich and in Greece Spyridion Tricoupis. At the present time its strong supporters are the prominent statesmen, Bratiano, Pashich, Venizelos and Andria Radovich.

However, the final solution of the Balkan problem is infeasible for the present time. If Bulgaria remains persistent in her desire to keep her territorial acquisitions in Macedonia and Dobrudja, the question will inevitably meet the cognate problems of Greece and Rumania. If the Entente powers in opposition to this fact hold that some satisfaction should be conceded to Bulgaria, they will only be able to persuade Greece of her national claims in Asia Minor, and Rumania of her claims in Transylvania. Similarly with Serbia, the Macedonian question can be reopened in favor of Bulgaria, provided Serbian national aspirations are achieved by the unification of the Southern Slavs (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). But here one may see the justification of the far-seeing prophecy of Albert Sorel in 1876, "When the Balkan Question appears to have been solved, Europe will inevitably be confronted by the Austrian Question." Those who refuse to speak of dismemberment of Austria-Hungary should not press the subject of Serbo-Bulgarian reconciliation. When, in the first Balkan war, Serb and Bulgar joined hands, they did so in open defiance of Vienna; and today more than ever is it impossible to be at the same time the advocate of Serbia, of Bulgaria, and of Austria-Hungary.

III

The elimination of the Austrian empire from the European concert is imminent. For the last fifty years events have notoriously proved that Austria-Hungary was the stumbling-block in the solution of the Eastern Question and the creation of a Balkan confederation. She pursued there a policy of envy, malice and cunning. Profiting from the misery of Bulgaria, she offered her in 1915 a loan of \$100,000,000 from the *Disconto Gesellschaft* syndicate. Half of this sum was paid in cash and the remainder of \$50,000,000 applied to outstanding obligations, giving the syndicate a two years' option on Bulgaria's 5 per cent government securities. Of course, all this bargain was made at the expense of Serbia and her territory in Macedonia and in the Morava valley. Bulgaria sold to Austria the bear's skin even before the bear was killed!

Nobody can deny that in the Balkan Peninsula Austria-Hungary has great political and economic interests. Of \$500,000,000 of export and import per year made by the Balkan states, one-fifth, i.e., \$100,000,000 is in connection with Austria-Hungary. Serbia, as an inland country having no outlet on the Aegean or the Adriatic Sea, is entirely dependent on her powerful northern neighbor. Dalmatia and Istria, which geographically form the seaboard of Serbia, and which are besides inhabited by Jugoslavs, rest in the control of alien hands. Unsuccessful in finding new markets, the Serbian peasants feel the pinch of a permanent struggle with Austrian and Magyar capitalists. Lying between the Bulgarian anvil and the Austrian hammer, Serbia will continue this struggle to the end. But the issues involved in the rivalry between Austria-Hungary and the young Balkan states rest upon other than economic motives. The unity of a race of twelve millions is at stake; the future of all the wide lands that lie between Pirot and Ljubljana, between Cetinje and Temišvar is concerned.

The Southern Slavs, sharing the same racial characteristics and forming a single national family, want to be united into one state. As immortal Jefferson said,

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to separation.

The causes which impel the Yugoslavs to separation from the Austrian empire are manifold. Austria-Hungary is not a state in a strict constitutional or international sense of the term, but simply a geographical expression. Most modern states are organized and practically homogeneous nations. They are inhabited by men of the same race, who speak the same language, who cherish the same ideals, and who are united by a great common heritage, by the bonds of a common literature, history and tradition. In Austria-Hungary nationalities are *forcibly* held together, and hate each other with a fierce hatred. Next to that, Austria-Hungary suffers from very dangerous social fissures. Whilst the body politic of the country is ruled by race privileges, the body social is dominated by caste privileges. In the Dual Monarchy the aristocracy and gentry still exercise mediaeval rights. In social and economic relations the characteristics are arrogance and brutality from above and humility and servility from below. The agricultural laborers, small farmers, and factory workers are treated almost like serfs. Austria-Hungary, as a purely artificial and preposterous state is united not by the unity of the people, but by a common bondage. The racial, national, religious and social antagonisms within the country are so great that they can only be described in the terms of Thomas Hobbes: *Bellum omnium contra omnes*.

IV

Far from being happy, the people in the Habsburg Monarchy live a miserable life. Plato once said that a state would be happy where philosophers were kings, or kings philosophers. As ill luck would have it, the Austrian philosophers have never been kings, nor the Habsburgs

philosophers. The various nationalities in Austria-Hungary are oppressed and subjected to one of the grossest tyrannies which the modern world knows. The Jugoslavs: Serbians, Croatians and Slovenes, do not want to be constituent parts of such a "state" which is in its entity a greater political, geographical and ethnical anomaly than ever was the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. The Southern Slavs are nowadays straining every nerve to form their own state, which will be independent from Austria-Hungary. In this new state they purport to be bound together, not only by a common racial origin, common language and historic tradition, but by the strong consciousness of the advantage and necessity of being united into one autonomous political unit. This future state, which was officially proclaimed by the Yugoslav Committee of London and the Serbian Government at Corfu, July 20, 1917, will have a homogeneous population of about 12,000,000 inhabitants, and will include the following states and provinces: Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, Carniola, Bačka and Banat. The new state, in itself, will constitute a young and wholesome force, as a dam in the defense of Europe against the German *Drang nach Süden*. The whole history of Serbia's struggle for liberty and independence, her unlimited courage, her religious and political tolerance, her democratic instincts and dispositional moderation—are the guarantees for fulfilment of this great task.

Small in territory, but great in spirit and valor, Serbia has shown the world an example of epic virtue and in no less degree a capacity for endurance in adversity. The Serbian people believe religiously in the justice and final triumph of the Yugoslav ideal, and while fighting for it they have given examples of lofty heroism and martyrdom. A better future is the rightful heritage of such a nation. Liberated and unified Serbia will become the focus and center of the whole Yugoslav race. Here is not a question of allotting to Serbia certain provinces inhabited by other branches of her race and tongue as "compensation."

Nothing can "compensate" heroism so magnificent, and sufferings so terrible as those of Serbia, save the unification of all the Yugoslav nation. The point in question lies in giving practical application of the working out of the Southern Slav race idea, and securing for Serbia that seaboard of which her traditional enemy, Austria, has long deprived her. It is further a question of conciliating the requirements of Italian national security with the requirements of Yugoslav unity. Without Yugoslav unity, formed in agreement with Italy, Italian national security cannot be obtained. The Italians and Yugoslavs have in the Adriatic identical interests. The Italians are a free and generous nation whose liberation in the time of Cavour, Mazzini, and Garibaldi, passed the same phase through which is today painfully laboring the liberation and unification of the Southern Slavs.

Reaching a friendly understanding in regard to the Dalmatian coast, the Italians and Yugoslavs will be linked by a fraternity of arms, of aims, and of interests, and will constitute a magnificent field of economic and cultural activity to the mutual benefit of both. When they come to this understanding there will be no longer any cleft in the Italo-Yugoslav Block into which Austria will be able to pour the corrosive acid of her inveterate intrigues. A permanent solution of the Southern Slav Question, in coöperation with Italy, will be the best guaranty and counterbalance athwart the Austro-German road to the Adriatic and the Balkan Peninsula.

If the future is to be devoted to correcting violations of the principle of nationality from the Habsburg Monarchy, considerable sacrifices are unavoidable. Truth has only one standard and the last word for the creation of the Yugoslav state with its natural ethnographical and economic boundaries will rest with political wisdom. Then, and only then, the people of the Balkan Peninsula will be able to unfold their rich resources for the welfare of human progress and for the establishment of justice and peace among the nations of southeastern Europe.